

Duxbury Sailors Excel in Bermuda Yacht Race

Submitted by Steve Woodworth

Seventy-three sailing yachts crossed the starting line for the 30th Anniversary Marion to Bermuda Cruising Yacht Race on Friday, June 15. Among them were three boats skippered and crewed by Duxbury sailors. One of them, *Silhouette*, skippered by Dave Caso, was destined to win.

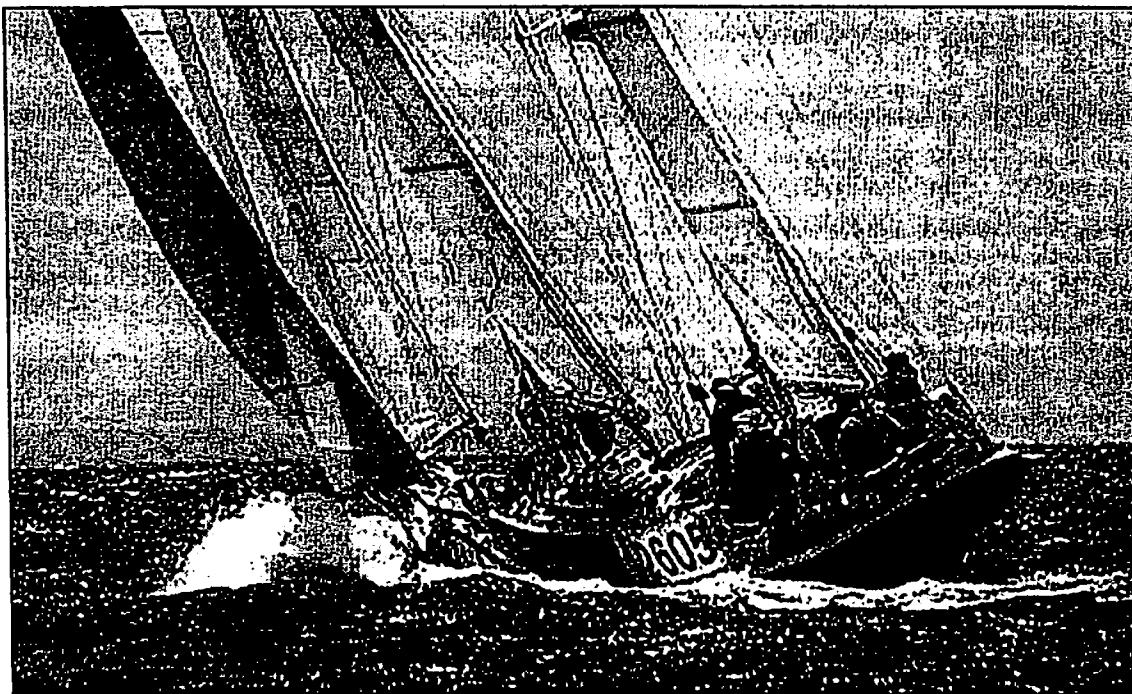
The 645-nautical-mile race is sponsored jointly by the Beverly Yacht Club of Marion, Mass., the Royal Hamilton Amateur Dingy Club, and the Blue Water Sailing Club. The prestigious ocean race is held on odd numbered years alternating with the equally famous Newport to Bermuda Race.

The start presented wind conditions uncharacteristic of Buzzards Bay. While sailors in that area have come to know the dependability of a southwesterly wind, a northerly had actually settled into the area a few days before the race and persisted on Friday,

an insurmountable lead. The 44-foot ketch was able to set an array of canvas unmatched by any comparable sized boat in the race and its significant 28,000 pound displacement enabled it to plow through the turbulent Gulf Stream with the stability and grace of a fine thoroughbred, frequently sustaining boat speeds in the 11 – 13 knot range.

By the time *Silhouette* exited "the Stream" it had amassed a huge lead over other Class D boats and was giving up very little ground to the Class A and Class B boats.

At this point in the race the wind had a dramatic change for the majority of the fleet – it died. Fortunately, for *Silhouette*, it had been sailed so well and so fast to this point in time that the area of doldrums that beset most of the fleet was well astern of *Silhouette* which continued to enjoy fair winds enabling Caso and crew to cross the finish line off St. David's Light in Bermuda on Tuesday in the early evening, it being



The winning team of the 2007 Marion to Bermuda race in action.



Ned Lawson, Mark Bobsiene, and Tom Phipps of the winning boat, *Silhouette*, stand with Gary Powell of the boat, *Attitude*.

making for a fast and fun downwind start. These are precisely the conditions favored by Caso's boat, *Silhouette*, a beautiful Cherubini 44 ketch.

Based upon projected boat speeds and handicaps, the participating boats were divided into five classes with Class A having the fastest boats and Class E the slowest. Notwithstanding the fact that *Silhouette* was rated by the race committee as a Class D boat, the favorable winds helped it lead the way out of Buzzards Bay beating many Class A boats to the buoy signifying the end of the Bay and the beginning of the open Atlantic.

Breezes remained light to moderate through Friday night, Saturday, and Saturday night. A significant portion of the fleet entered the Gulf Stream Sunday afternoon or evening and found sustained 20 - 25 knot winds and 6 - 8 foot following seas. This is when Caso and his crew aboard *Silhouette* began opening up what would prove to be

the only Class D boat finishing on Tuesday with the next closest boat in this class finishing nearly a full day later.

Caso's performance was particularly impressive considering he is a relative newcomer to ocean racing. While having a long history of sailing, prior to the 2005 Marion to Bermuda Race, Caso had limited experience racing.

While each class is scored separately, all of the classes are also scored together to determine an "overall winner." When doing so, the race committee applies the handicap of each boat to determine its "corrected time." When the calculations were done, *Silhouette* "corrected out" some four hours ahead of the 72 foot Class A boat, Kathleen, to claim first place overall.

In a post race interview, Caso credited his crew for the win and explained that this was "just the right wind" for *Silhouette* to perform at its best. He also suggested luck played a role in the victory as he and his crew were "at the

right place at the right time."

Those who know Caso and have followed his preparations for the race, however, recognize luck had little to do with his victory. A fellow Duxbury sailor observed "nobody deserves this more than Dave - he threw himself into this 150 percent, focused,

worked hard, and surrounded himself with a great crew."

In fact the *Silhouette* crew has to be regarded as one of the most talented and experienced in the regatta. Navigator, Sam Lawson has sailed in nine Bermuda races and his daughter, Eleanor, at the tender age of 20, is a veteran of five Bermuda races. Tactician, Ned Lawson, executive director of Duxbury Bay Maritime School and an accomplished Flying Scott racer, has three Bermuda races to his credit as do crew Tom Phipps and Mark Bobseine.

At the Saturday night awards ceremony, held at the Bermudian Government House, Caso received four trophies. The last remaining founder of the Marion to Bermuda Cruising Yacht Race, Dickie Bird, presented the Gossling Rum Founders trophy to Caso for his overall first place finish. For winning Class D, Caso was also presented the Joel B. Sykes Memorial trophy. As *Silhouette* was also deter-



Dave Caso, captain of *Silhouette*, swept the awards ceremony by winning four awards in the recent 2007 Marion-Bermuda race. Caso, center, poses with his wife, Deborah, and Sam Lawson, the navigator of the *Silhouette*.

mined to exhibit the best performance by an electronically navigated yacht, Caso and his navigator, Sam Lawson also received the Royal Hamilton Dingy Club Past Commodores trophy.

Finally, for his outstanding performances in last year's Newport to Bermuda Race combined with this year's Marion to Bermuda Race Caso was presented the SAIL Bermuda Ocean Cruising Yacht trophy presented by his Excellency Sir John Vereker, the Governor of Bermuda.

Caso wasn't the only Duxbury sailor to go to the podium at the Awards Ceremony. Jack May received the Commodore's Cup for the best performance by a Blue Water Sailing Club yacht. In this, his second Bermuda Race, May turned in an impressive performance by finishing fifth in Class D aboard his Tartan 41 Sloop, *Keewaydin*.

In a brief post race interview May echoed the frustrations of many of the racers over the wind's disappearing act when he commented "my favorite part of the race was 3:00 on Wednesday – that's when it was over."

Keewaydin also had aboard the youngest Duxbury sailor, the 17 year old Jillian

May, daughter of the skipper. Jillian observed "I liked it, I'd do it again."

Veteran of numerous Bermuda races and other ocean races, Barney Davis, also played a key role in the success of *Keewaydin*.

Shawn Dahlen's 42-foot Beneteau sloop, *Attitude*, rounded out the trio of Duxbury boats. While this was Dahlen's first time skippering a Bermuda bound boat, he served as Dave Caso's navigator aboard *Silhouette* in the past two Bermuda races. *Attitude*'s navigator, Steve Woodworth and on board weather specialist, Scott Schermerhorn also crewed on *Silhouette* for the 2005 race. This was the first long distance ocean race for crew Gary Powell, Andre Martecchini, and Keith Fotta.

This being his first Bermuda Race at the helm, with a new boat, Dahlen was reasonably satisfied with the seventh place finish in Class C but eagerly looks forward to the next Bermuda Race to improve on this finish. His favorite part of the race is what he described as an "exhilarating" finish in the early evening hours of Wednesday when the wind piped up and he had to battle a larger yacht approaching from